

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows.

Claims 1-25. (Canceled).

26. (presently amended) A ~~promotion~~ method for promoting the sale of merchandise and services through ~~for use by~~ an automatic vending machine, comprising the sequential steps of:

1) presenting, by a point issuing device in the automatic vending machine, point information determined by the automatic vending machine, the point information related to points issued for promotion of sale merchandise to a ~~consumer~~ user at a time of merchandise sales to the ~~consumer~~ user by the automatic vending machine;

2) transmitting to a center device, by operation by the ~~consumer~~ user of a portable communication device ~~terminal~~ carried by the user, the point information determined and presented by the point issuing device in the point information presenting step, together with identification information for the ~~consumer~~ user;

3) receiving at the center device the point information transmitted from the portable communication device ~~terminal~~ of the ~~consumer~~ user in the point information transmitting step and the identification information for the consumer;

4) totaling and managing at the center device points corresponding to the point information received in the receiving step for the ~~consumer identified by the~~ identification information ~~user~~; and,

offering a prescribed the merchandise and services corresponding to the points to the consumer by user through the automatic vending machine by referring to the points totaled and managed in the totaling and managing step and relating the points to the merchandise and services, wherein:

the point information ~~comprises~~ includes a module code for identifying the automatic vending machine point-issuing device and a secret code related to the points, and

the point information presenting step ~~comprises~~ includes the step of encrypting by the point issuing device at least the secret code among the module code and the secret code before presentation of the point information to the ~~consumer~~ user.

27. (original) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the point information presenting step comprises the steps of:

effectively setting a display unit of the point issuing device based on a return signal issued by operation of a return lever of the automatic vending machine;

setting a timer for counting a predetermined time based on the return signal;

displaying on a display unit of the point issuing device the point information based on a money collecting signal for confirming that the sales of merchandises was performed by the automatic vending machine; and

erasing the display of the point information on the display unit of the point issuing device based on when the return signal is reissued by re-operation of the return lever or when the timer times out.

28. (previously presented) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein

the point information presenting step comprises the step of presenting the point information to the consumer by printing out the point information on a prescribed form from the point issuing device.

29. (previously presented) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the point information presenting step comprises the step of presenting the point information to the consumer by inputting the point information to the portable terminal carried by the user, by means of communication between the point issuing device and the portable terminal.
30. (previously presented) The promotion method according to claim 29, wherein the portable terminal comprises a portable telephone set carried by the consumer, and input of the point information to the portable terminal is performed using any of wire communication, wireless communication, infrared communication, and audio communication between the point issuing device and the portable telephone set.
31. (previously presented) The promotion method according to claims 26, 27, 28, 29, or 30, wherein the secret code comprises parity information for checking alteration of the point information.
32. (previously presented) The promotion method according to claims 26, 27, 28, 29, or 30, wherein the secret code comprises at least a point issue number unique to the issued point information, and the center device judges duplicate use of the point information based on the point issue number.
33. (previously presented) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the center device manages a state of at least one of the point issuing device and the automatic vending machine in which the point issuing device is provided, based on the module code.

34. (previously presented) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the center device manages a status of use of the system by the consumer based on identification information for the user transmitted from the portable terminal of the user.

35. (previously presented) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the center device permits the user to read point information stored and managed for the consumer in response to a request from the user using the portable terminal.

36. (presently amended) A ~~promotion~~ system for promoting the sale of products and services for use by ~~through~~ an automatic vending machine, comprising:

a point issuing device, in the automatic vending machine, whereby the automatic vending machine presents to a ~~consumer of the system~~ user of the automatic vending machine coded point information related to points issued for promotion of sale of ~~merchandise~~ products and services upon sale of merchandise by the automatic vending machine;

a center device for storing and managing points corresponding to the coded point information presented by the point issuing device, ~~in correspondence with~~ by the ~~consumer~~ user;

a ~~portable terminal~~ personal communications device carried by the ~~consumer~~ user for transmitting, by the operation of the ~~portable terminal~~ personal communications device by the ~~consumer~~ user, to the center device the coded point information presented by the point issuing device, together with identification ~~information for~~ of the user;

update means, provided in the center device, for decoding the coded point information transmitted by the portable terminal, and for updating points which have been stored and managed for the consumer based on the points corresponding to the decoded

point information; and

~~service~~ premium providing means for offering a ~~prescribed service~~ premium to the consumer by the automatic vending machine based on the points which have been stored and managed for the consumer, wherein:

the point information ~~comprises~~ includes a module code to identify the ~~point issuing device~~ automatic vending machine, and a secret code related to the points; and

~~among the module code and the secret code~~ whereby, the point issuing device encrypts at least the secret code before presenting the point information and products and services to the user.

37. (previously presented) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein the point issuing device comprises:

setting means for effectively setting a display unit of the point issuing device based on a return signal issued by operation of a return lever of the automatic vending machine;

a timer for counting a predetermined time based on the return signal;

display control means for displaying on the display unit of the point issuing device the point information on a condition that a money collecting signal for confirming that the sales of merchandises as performed by the automatic vending machine is issued, after the display unit of the point issuing device has been effectively set by the setting means; and

erase control means for erasing the display of the point information displayed on the display unit of the point issuing device based on when the return signal is reissued by re-operation of the return lever or when the timer times out.

38. (previously presented) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein
the point issuing device presents the point information to the consumer by
means of printing out the point information on a prescribed form by the use of printing
means provided in the point issuing device.

39. (original) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein
the point issuing device comprises input means for inputting the point
information to the portable terminal through a communication between the point issuing
device and the portable terminal.

40. (previously presented) The promotion system according to claim 39, wherein
the portable terminal comprises a portable telephone set carried by the
consumer, and
the input means inputs the point information to the portable telephone set
using any of wire communication, wireless communication, infrared communication, and
audio communication.

41. (previously presented) The promotion system according to claims 36, 37, 38, 39,
or 40, wherein
the secret code comprises parity information for checking alteration of the
point information.

42. (previously presented) The promotion system according to claims 36, 37, 38, 39,
or 40, wherein
the secret code comprises at least a point issue number unique to the
issued point information, and
the center device detects duplicate use of the point information based on
the point issue number comprised in the point information.

43. (original) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein
the center device comprises an equipment database to store and manage a state of at least one of the point issuing device and the automatic vending machine in which the point issuing device is provided, in correspondence with the module code.
44. (previously presented) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein
the center device comprises a user database to store and manage circumstances of use of the system by the consumer, in correspondence with the identification information for the consumer transmitted from the portable terminal of the consumer.
45. (previously presented) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein
the center device comprises accessing means which enables the consumer to access the point information stored and managed for the consumer, in response to a request made from the consumer using the portable terminal.
46. (original) The promotion method according to claim 31, wherein
the secret code comprises at least a point issue number unique to the issued point information, and
the center device judges duplicate use of the point information based on the point issue number.
47. (original) The promotion system according to claim 41, wherein
the secret code comprises at least a point issue number unique to the issued point information, and
the center device detects duplicate use of the point information based on the point issue number comprised in the point information.